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ABSTRACT

This is a report on the National Articulation and Transfer Network (NATN) program, which seeks to increase the achievement and aspirations of students from underserved population, namely African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans. More than 150 Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI), and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCU) are part of the network. These institutions collaborate with community colleges to establish articulation agreements and transfer guides in order to increase the transfer rate and ultimately the graduation rate of African American, Hispanic, and Native American students. The report shows that White students earn Bachelor's degrees over 50% more often than minority students. Some factors attributed to low minority achievement include poor economic circumstances, parents' educational level, racial prejudice/discrimination, and lack of quality educational resources. The report states that these factors lead to inadequate college preparation, lower student self-confidence, and lower student motivation. The lack of further education and holding a postsecondary degree also comprises the futures of minority students. The NATN hopes to assist these students through financial support, mentoring, tracking, and career planning. The report includes a diagram of NATN services. (MKF)

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National Articulation and Transfer Network (NATN): An Alternative Path for Underserved Student Populations to Access Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) & Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCU)

ORGANIZATIONAL SPONSORS:
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities
United Negro College Fund
American Association of Community Colleges
National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education
American Council on Education
Council of the Great City Schools
League for Innovation in the Community College
American Indian Higher Education Consortium

COORDINATING INSTITUTION:
City College of San Francisco

Despite mounting concern and increased investment, the educational gap between white students and minority students has widened over the past thirty years. As more students have entered our educational systems, white students have proportionately remained in the system longer and completed diplomas and degrees in greater numbers than their African American, Hispanic, and Native American counterparts. Higher education, in particular, has struggled with the need to increase access and opportunity despite growing state and national pressures for higher academic standards and more definitive performance measures. Unless new and innovative programs are specifically designed to provide pathways into higher education that can sustain both achievement and aspiration through to graduation the current gap will widen, diminishing educational opportunity not only for individuals, but for whole segments of society.

The partnership underlying this proposal represents just such an innovation, unprecedented in size and scope: the **National Articulation and Transfer Network (NATN)**. Through this historic agreement the nation's large urban community colleges, the primary venue for growing minority enrollment, and the nation's select culturally enriched colleges and universities, the **Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), and Tribal Colleges and Universities**, working in concert with the member schools (K-12) of the **Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS)**, have proposed to create the linkages that will provide an alternate pathway through higher education for students of color. Such an initiative seeks to increase both the achievement and the aspirations of our country's traditionally underserved students, increasing their graduation rates and reversing established trends.

Through this project, representatives of the more than 150 member institutions of the "Network" are collaborating through established work groups on the design and development of essential articulation agreements and transfer guides, the fundamental web-based infrastructure, and a basic research paradigm to capture the outcomes of the overall program. As these essential components are developed they will be field tested through a selected number of college beta sites that will serve as an incubator to refine the system prior to expansion of the Network to all

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participating colleges and universities. As a result of this effort, the beta sites will begin to demonstrate the potential of this unique program, increasing articulation and transfer from the community colleges to the linked HBCUs, HSIs, and Tribal Colleges by at least 10% in comparison to the 2001 base year.

The Problem: Inadequate Access and Opportunity

Today's youth are attending college in record numbers. In fact, the percentage of high school graduates ages 18 to 24 enrolling in college rose 11.2% from 1972 to 1997, a twenty-five year period[1]. However, a college education is still more accessible to some than others as the gap between white student and black or Hispanic student enrollment in higher education continues to widen. Without intervention, increasing numbers of African American and Hispanic youth will be left behind.

The fault line is established in high school as 91.6% of all white students between the ages of 20 and 24 complete high school compared to 80.5% of the 20 to 24 year old black students[2], and only 62.3% of the 20 to 24 year old Hispanic students[3]. This divide defines the beginning of the educational gap impacting higher education, a separation that has widened from 5.4% in 1972 to 7.1% in 1997 despite increased investment[4].

This faulty line expands in college. While the proportion of adults who earn a bachelor's degree is up nearly 10% over the last three decades, the proportion of those degrees earned by minorities has actually declined significantly. In 1971 there was a 12% difference in the attainment of four-year degrees between black and Hispanic adults in comparison with white adults. However in 1998, despite increases in the percentage of adults receiving a degree, the gap between white and minority degree attainment grew by 41%[5]. In one state, for example, after six years of enrollment 35.7% of the white students had received a baccalaureate degree, while only 18.5% of Blacks and 18.9% of Hispanics had received degrees[6].

There are many reasons underlying this low achievement. The "Report of the Task Force on Retention and Graduation" of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (1998) discusses five factors that are strongly associated with student educational outcomes: economic circumstances, parents' educational level; racial prejudice and ethnic discrimination; the cultural attributes of home, community, and school; and the quality, amount and uses of school resources.

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[1] The Condition of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, March, 1999.

[2] Data from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census: Table 1 "Educational Attainment of the Population 15 Years and Over, by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin": March 2000.

[3] Ibid.

[4] The Condition of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, March, 1999.

[5] Higher Education and National Affairs, "More Adults are Obtaining Postsecondary Education, NCES Data Show," American Council on Education, November, 2000.

[6] Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, "Report of the Task Force on Retention and Graduation," April 15, 1998.

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This combination of factors not only leads to inadequate preparation, but also to eroded confidence and ultimately depresses college success.

Yet the importance of attending college is acknowledged by all. Indeed, a recent report on the expectations of families for their children to attend college showed that while all families believe in the importance of a college education, African American and Hispanic families believe more strongly than white parents that a college education is necessary to get a good job[7]. And they are right! Workers without postsecondary studies and baccalaureate degrees earn at least $10,000 less than those with baccalaureate degrees. Given that more than four-fifths of these growing populations hold no postsecondary degree, their futures are compromised without increasing access to – and success in – higher education.

The Solution: National Articulation and Transfer Network (NATN)

Seventeen months ago an historic articulation agreement was developed between City College of San Francisco, a large urban community college, and 15 Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), all baccalaureate institutions. The HBCUs are a network of more than 100 public and private colleges and universities that graduate hundreds of Black scholars, lawyers, doctors, business people, and educators each year. Over the past year, the enthusiasm of all parties to pursue this type of partnership has multiplied. As a result, the Chancellor of City College and the participating Presidents of the HBCUs have expanded the initial network to a larger group of urban community colleges and other HBCUs. Together, they have set as their emboldened purpose "to elevate the rates of access, retention, and attainment of four-year degrees on a national scale for African American students." While linking these two systems, community colleges and HBCUs, seems like an obvious idea (given the number of students they serve and the profile of same), there has never before been any attempt to create such a systemic connection.

Over the past two years, the Network has been formalized with the support and involvement of the U.S. Department of Education, the White House Initiative on HBCUs, and the American Association of Community Colleges. In April of 2000, City College of San Francisco brought together more than 75 college presidents, chancellors, board members, provosts, government representatives, and admission officers to discuss the proposed national alliance. Together they agreed to establish a national articulation network so that students from any participating community college could easily transfer to an HBCU of their choice and pursue their baccalaureate degree studies. Such an agreement would enable students to transfer across state borders to the HBCU of their choice.

In November of 2000, a follow-up retreat attended by nearly 50 colleges was held in Dallas where participants focused on four areas of concentration to realize the goal of establishing the transfer network: 1) development of the academic model for transfer; 2) exploration of web-based technological applications to support the network; 3) development of a

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[7] Immerwhar, J. and Foleno, T. Great Expectations: How the Public and Parents—White, African American, and Hispanic—View Higher Education. National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, Public Agenda, Consortium for Policy Research in Education, National Center for Postsecondary Improvement, May, 2000.

research model for the assessment of outcomes; and 4) exploration of resource development opportunities to initiate the Network. As a result of that session, four work groups were established which have continued to meet and refine their ideas.

With the decision made to establish the Network, participants at the Dallas meeting felt strongly that others who serve underrepresented minorities should benefit from this new alliance, and that those institutions who serve these students, specifically the Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) and Tribal Colleges, should be invited into the Network. In April 2001, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), representing more than 157 institutions dedicated specifically to the education and development of the nation's Latino youth, has accepted this invitation to participate in the Network alliance. With both HBCUs and HSIs participating equally in the Network, efforts turned to invite the nation's Tribal Colleges and Universities, a group of selected institutions serving primarily Native American Indians, to join in the partnership. In February of 2002, the Board of Directors of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) joined the "Network" as a sponsoring parent organization.

In April of 2001, the most recent meeting of the Network was held in Chicago with a growing number of community colleges, HBCUs, and HSIs representatives in attendance. The purpose of this meeting was to provide an update on the efforts of the four work groups and chart the course for the next phase of development. As a result of that meeting, the agenda was set for the next phase of development supported by public and private funding sources with participant membership funds expected to sustain the initiative once operational.

The Significance: Systemic Partnership for Alternative Pathways

Traditionally, efforts to increase those underrepresented in higher education have focused on the provision of specialized programs designed to assist students in building their skills to graduate from high school, enter and complete postsecondary education. Local and national efforts such as the TRIO Programs - Talent Search, Upward Bound, and Student Support Services, Title III, and, later, Title V - have demonstrated tremendous success in assisting disadvantaged individuals who are first generation, low income, and disabled to achieve their educational goals, a factor which has contributed significantly to the development of a pathway to higher education. However, given the broad focus of these programs, the numbers of potential students seeking entry, and the continuing challenges inherent in the struggles of cultural minorities, such efforts, while successful, have had a relatively small impact on the achievement of minorities at the baccalaureate level. NATN proposes to become the pipeline that attracts, expands the scope, increases, and sustains the impact of these efforts.

It was this imperative that led the African American Scholastic Programs under the direction of Dr. Henry L. Augustine, Jr. at City College of San Francisco (CCSF) to establish the initial linkages with the Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Beginning in 1992 with a high school program designed to increase graduation and retention rates among African American males, Dr. Augustine's inspired program expanded the following year to include an annual spring tour of HBCUs. Each year approximately 50 prospective high school and CCSF students and their faculty visit a selection of HBCUs across the nation. The strength of the relationships built between City College of San Francisco and the HBCU campuses toured led to

the signing of 15 articulation agreements in 1999 with institutions such as Spelman College, Howard University, Jackson State University, Tougaloo College, and Wilberforce University. The news of these historic agreements spread rapidly, with local and national papers praising the idea while trade papers and professional journals promoted the concept, leading to requests from other institutions to participate in the effort. Capitalizing on the collective experience of institutions in the development of statewide articulation and transfer networks among public and private colleges and universities across the country, the National Articulation and Transfer Network proposes to become the innovative new route to higher education between the urban community colleges and the minority baccalaureate institutions.

With the Network established, the parent organizations of the targeted urban-based colleges, universities, and K-12 systems have all formally pledged their support and assistance to expand access to baccalaureate degrees for Associate of Arts students. On March 15, 2001, at a meeting in Washington D.C. hosted by H. Patrick Swygert, President of Howard University, and Dr. Philip R. Day, Jr., Chancellor, City College of San Francisco, a **Cooperative Agreement** was signed by leaders of five leading educational organizations: the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (**NAFEO**), the American Association of Community Colleges (**AACC**), the United Negro College Fund (**UNCF**), the Council of the Great City Schools (**CGCS**), and the American Council on Education (**ACE**). Later, on April 2, the Board of Directors of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (**HACU**) unanimously endorsed the establishment of the Network and became a signatory to this historic agreement. Finally, the discussion with the Executive Director (Dr. Gerald Gipp) and leadership of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (**AIHEC**) led to their recent support and endorsement.

By joining together, this unprecedented and historic partnership will provide an alternate pathway for a target population that has generally been known as the **"neglected majority,"**[8] within which there is a disproportionate and concentrated level of minority representation. By promoting the possibilities with the faculty and staff through the Council of the Great City Schools, students that heretofore felt excluded will seize the opportunity to pursue postsecondary education and a better future. With new hope and a support system to enhance achievement and ensure mobility, more students will enroll in the nation's community colleges seeking to advance to a four-year program of their choice within the HBCU, HSI, and Tribal Colleges "Network." At the baccalaureate level, transferring community college students will be able to complete their studies in record numbers, moving into the workforce to improve the quality of their lives as well as the lives of others. Overall, it is anticipated that the numbers of minority students completing their baccalaureate degree through this alternative pathway will increase by 25% over the next five years, making a significant impact both on the lives of these graduates and those they encounter while also making significant strides toward reversing the widening education gap.

Project Plans

On behalf of the National Articulation and Transfer Network (NATN), City College of San Francisco is taking the lead in identifying potential sources of funding to operationalize the Network through the design, development, and field testing of the academic, technological, and

[8] Parnell, Dale, *The Neglected Majority*, Jossey-Bass, 1985.

research framework. Working with the primary "Work Groups" of the Network, emphasis will be placed on planning, developing, and fully implementing 12 critical components of the program:

- Core System and Portal Component
- Articulation/Transfer Component
- Transfer Manual and Guide
- College Information Component
- Communications Component
- Educational and Career Planning Component
- Student Monitoring Component
- Financial Aid Component
- Distance Education Component
- Longitudinal Research Database
- Other Components Under Consideration
- Non-Technology Areas for Development

I. Core System and Portal Component

The core of the technology system will be the NATN Web Site that is resident on a host server and accessible to all member institutions and partners, students, faculty, staff, parents, and other users who have connectivity to the Internet through an installed browser. The purpose of the core system is to support the technology applications and underlying software components, provide technology processing and storage for the applications, and offer user-friendly portal integration for users accessing the system.

Portal. This is the gateway to the NATN interactive technology system, providing a welcoming page, log-on, and numerous links to a broad range of components designed to support student success in the transition to and among high schools, colleges and universities presented in an inviting, compelling, personalized, interactive, and intuitive environment.

Exchange System. The exchange system is actually a central server or servers that host the core platform and the various components of the interactive technology system. The central system is the environment for application development, training, and production. Users access the system and receive help support.

II. Articulation/Transfer Component

In keeping with the overall effort to provide pathways into higher education that sustain both achievement and aspiration, the member institutions of the NATN will sign an agreement governing the matriculation of community college graduates in participating baccalaureate colleges and universities, thereby facilitating successful transfer to upper level programs of study within the Network.

The overall purpose of the Transfer Agreement is to provide a structure through which transfer articulation from the community college to the baccalaureate can be supported at both levels. To that end, the member institutions understand and agree that transfer articulation is with the Network as a whole, and not with individual colleges within the association, thereby rendering degrees taken at any participating institution equally transferable.

Developing joint admissions agreements between high schools, community colleges, and senior colleges as a way of motivating and guiding students into the Network is also being discussed. This would allow for an affordable package in a "stepping stone" approach that might act as an incentive for students. Also, students who apply directly to an HBCU, an HSI, or a Tribal College, but who are not fully prepared, might be referred to neighboring community colleges that can provide remediation and developmental support to better prepare them for senior-level coursework. Regardless of the starting point, any boilerplate agreement should also integrate critical student elements like financial aid.

III. Transfer Manual and Guide Component

This is the component for articulating programs and courses among participating institutions and processing transfer plans and approvals for students from high school to community colleges to four-year colleges or universities and to graduate schools and other educational agencies. The component includes program requirements matching, courses and course equivalency matching, and degree auditing.

IV. College Information Component

This is the component for visiting and exploring colleges, universities, successful students, alumni, faculty, sample classes and courses, campus facilities, tours, and program offerings.

V. Communication Component

This is the component that links synchronous and asynchronous communication between and among all users, including students, counselors, advisors, admissions personnel, mentors, instructors, parents, alumni and others using e-mail, chat rooms, messaging, and video/audio conferencing. It also provides for calendars, schedules, and other "customized" information sharing.

VI. Educational and Career Planning Component

This is the component for students to assess their interests, aptitudes, and experiences in the light of alternative educational paths to careers and career preparation. Sequential sub-components include assessment of educational and career goals, career exploration and planning, educational opportunity exploration and planning, and educational learning.

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VII. Student Monitoring Component

This is the component for tracking the progress of students through the pipeline of successfully completing goals, courses, programs, and intermediary milestones in their educational plans, prompting recognition for achievement and completions as well as interventions for remediating deficiencies and goal incompletion. The component also enables the collection of useful information for purposes of evaluation and assessment.

VIII. Financial Aid Component

This is the component for providing students and others with financial aid information, including federal, state, and institutional financial aid. The component also provides for estimation of a financial aid package according to student background information.

IX. Distance Education Component

This is the component for linking students with existing on-line distance education opportunities relevant to their educational plans and interests, including brokering and sampling courses on-line. This component may also provide actual on-line courses which are unique to receiving institutions and may even be required during the first two years of the curriculum (e.g. course on Wilberforce History).

X. Longitudinal Research Database

It was strongly recommended that a research model be developed to ensure appropriate tracking of students from urban high schools and community colleges to the HBCUs, HSIs, and Tribal Colleges. By monitoring student progress and documenting their achievement, persistence, degree completion and placement, the Network could attain accountability while providing insight into minority student development. Such a research agenda could provide some interesting investigative projects for HBCU/HSI/Tribal College graduate students.

Expected Outcomes

- Increased access to career, program, and college admission information for students, parents, and guidance counselors;
- Creation of K-16 pipeline that focuses on minority student access, retention, and success;
- Improved levels of access to baccalaureate degrees for underrepresented minorities that could result in increased numbers of four-year college graduates.
- Creation of a sustainable web-based, on-line interactive technological infrastructure that provides for ongoing communication, connectivity, and delivery of services over the Network to students, parents, guidance counselors, faculty, and participating institutions/segments.

XI. Other Components Under Consideration

Additional technology components of the Technology System to be explored for potential development include: Going to College, Prospecting for Students, E-community, Portfolios, and Assessment/Testing (e.g. learning styles, test preparation, career assessment, basic skills, creativity, achievement motivation).

XII. Non-Technology Areas for Development

Additional aspects of the NATN project need to be explored for potential contribution to the success of the effort. (1) One of the primary non-technology areas to be developed is a marketing effort to reach out to high school students, non-enrolled college-age students, and working adults. This component might be called "Building Awareness." Its purpose is to reach out and enable students and others to access the technology system. It will require marketing resources and innovative ideas. It should reach into middle schools and high schools to help students who haven't reached the point of how to make decisions about education and careers. It has been suggested that radio talk shows and "rap" music be considered as possible venues of outreach. Video can be used with chat groups involving people-to-people discussing possibilities and how to access opportunities. The technology system should support the outreach effort. (2) Another area to be developed and related to awareness is "access to the web." It will require ubiquitous access to Internet connectivity to ensure that awareness leads to access. It is assumed that most students can access this technology through schools and libraries, however this needs to be investigated further and solutions developed, if needed.

What are our most pressing resource needs?

Funds are needed to support the formal planning, development, and implementation efforts of the NATN over a minimum of three years. It is expected that once the system is operationalized, the participating institutions will be able to sustain the program through ongoing fee assessment. Anticipated costs for the first three years are between $10-15 million.

These funds would support:

- Development of specifications for the Network;
- Expanded involvement by faculty, department chairs, and deans in planning discussions on lower- and upper-division instructional issues;
- Joint planning efforts of transfer advising and counseling staffs of HBCUs, HSIs, community colleges, and high school populations;
- Development, testing, and piloting of web-based applications for the Network;
- Overall planning, management, and evaluation activity between and among sectors;
- Project management, leadership, and marketing of the Network.

Funding Sources:

NATN is funded by in-kind and direct support from participating institutions. An **Appropriations Request** of $2 million was submitted in April by **Congressmen Major R.**

Owens (D-11th NY) and **Ruben E. Hinojosa (D-15th TX)**, lead members of the **Congressional Black and Hispanic Caucuses** respectively. NATN was also invited to submit a final proposal to the **Fund for the Improvement of Secondary Education (FIPSE)**. The latter effort was funded by the Department of Education for $875,000 over a three-year period, to provide "seed money" for the NATN. The Congressional Earmark request was funded at the level of $800,000. Additional funding sources are also being explored, including both private foundation and private sector involvement. It is expected that once the Network is developed and operationalized, member institutions will contribute a significant portion of the funding needed for ongoing support and maintenance of the program.

National Significance of NATN:

The importance of the NATN program on a national level is that it meaningfully addresses and begins to resolve the troubling issue of significant underrepresentation of students of color in higher education today; and, correspondingly, their ability to benefit from high-wage, high value-added jobs of the future.

Additional funding for this project will enable NATN to develop and implement its on-line transfer program. As a result, significantly greater numbers of urban high school and community college students will have easy access to a wide "menu" of four-year, degree-granting institutions dedicated to the retention and success of minority populations. Given that the primary student populations these institutions serve face many of the same obstacles to higher education, this historical effort promises to close the gap in achievement by a factor of 50%. Additionally, it is anticipated that the number of Latino, African American, and Native American transfer students will increase by as much as 25% within the first three years of full implementation. It is also expected that this number will increase as the number of participating institutions and the awareness levels of this historic initiative grows.

To achieve its promise as a nation, the United States needs the effort, input, and accomplishment of all of its citizens. We cannot succeed as a society in a polarized world of "haves" and "have nots." NATN provides historically underserved minority populations severely underrepresented in institutions of higher learning with a road map in secondary school, that, if followed (and with support built into the NATN to keep these students on course) will lead to their becoming the most productive citizens that their innate, nurtured talents will allow.

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NATIONAL ARTICULATION AND TRANSFER NETWORK (NATN) OVERVIEW

Participating Institutions: The lead institution for the **National Articulation and Transfer Network (NATN)** initiative is **City College of San Francisco (CCSF)**, a public, not-for-profit institution of Higher Education and a community college. Beyond the lead institution there is a structured **Steering Committee** comprised of 28 member institutions representing urban-based **community colleges**, four-year colleges and universities (**Historically Black Colleges and Universities** and **Hispanic Serving Institutions**), as well as a select number of **secondary schools** located in urban districts. The educational sectors currently represented by NATN, including the **American Association of Community Colleges** (AACC), **American Council on Education** (ACE), **Council of the Great City Schools** (CGCS), **Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities** (HACU), **League for Innovation in the Community College, National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education** (NAFEO), and the **United Negro College Fund** (UNCF) have never before worked together to develop a common vision for providing support services to underserved minority populations. This Network is already achieving that goal. As of February, 2002, the Board of Directors of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) have joined the "Network" as a sponsoring parent organization.

Main Activities: The **National Articulation and Transfer Network (NATN)** calls for the following:

- Development of an academic database of institutions and institutions' transfer agreements that include common general education requirements, course/program pre-requisites, and individual contacts at the transfer counselor, department chair, and dean-level;
- Utilization of web-based technology to support the sharing of information between institutions (HBCUs, HSIs, Tribal Colleges, and urban-based community colleges and high schools) and provision of **on-line student support services**, such as pre-admissions counseling; admissions/application/transcript processing; student orientations (program and instructional level, including "virtual" campus tours); educational counseling/career planning; academic advising; and monitoring and tracking of students' progress;
- Development of an appropriate research model to ensure evaluation of the network, track student progress, and document their achievement, persistence, and degree completion rates.

Programmatic Objectives:

- Increased access to career, program, and college admission information for students, parents, and guidance counselors;
- Creation of K-16 pipeline that focuses on minority student access, retention, and success;
- Improved levels of access to baccalaureate degrees for underrepresented minorities that could result in increased numbers of four-year college graduates;
- Improved levels of access to and success in high-demand baccalaureate programs and graduate studies in science, math, and technology where minority students and women are significantly underrepresented.

Funding Sources: NATN is funded by in-kind and direct support from participating institutions. An **Appropriations Request** of $2 million was submitted in April 2001 by **Congressmen Major R. Owens (D-11th NY)** and **Ruben E. Hinojosa (D-15th TX)**, lead members of the **Congressional Black and Hispanic Caucuses** respectively. NATN was also invited to submit a final proposal to the **Fund for the Improvement of Secondary Education (FIPSE)**. The latter effort was funded by the Department of Education for $875,000 over a three-year period, to provide "seed money" for the NATN. The Congressional Earmark request was funded at the level of $800,000 via the office of **Rep. Nancy Pelosi, House Democratic Whip**. Additional funding sources are also being explored, including both private foundation and private sector involvement. It is expected that once the Network is developed and operationalized, member institutions will contribute a significant portion of the funding needed for ongoing support and maintenance of the program.

National Significance of NATN: The importance of the NATN program on a national level is that it meaningfully addresses and begins to resolve the troubling issue of significant underrepresentation of African American, Latino, and Native/American Indian students in higher education today; and, correspondingly, their ability to benefit from high-wage, high value-added jobs of the future.

The educational gap between white students and their African-American, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American counterparts has widened over the past 30 years. Mounting pressures from state and national governments to raise academic standards and tighten performance measures have forced colleges and universities to become more selective. As a result, educational access and support services for traditionally underserved student populations have become increasingly limited and will continue to decline unless new and innovative programs are specifically designed to provide the kind of "safety net" necessary to keep at-risk populations in the education pipeline.

Additional funding for this project will enable NATN to develop and implement its on-line transfer program. As a result, significantly greater numbers of urban high school and community college students will have easy access to a wide "menu" of four-year, degree-granting institutions dedicated to the retention and success of minority populations. Given that the primary student populations these institutions serve face many of the same obstacles to higher education, this historical effort promises to **close the gap in achievement by a factor of 50%**. Additionally, it is anticipated that the number of Latino, African American, and Native American transfer students will increase by as much as 25% within the first three years of full implementation. It is also expected that this number will increase as the number of participating institutions and the awareness levels of the Network grows.

To achieve its promise as a nation, the United States needs the effort, input, and accomplishment of all of its citizens. We cannot succeed as a society in a polarized world of "haves" and "have nots." NATN provides historically underserved minority populations severely underrepresented in institutions of higher learning with a road map in secondary school, that, if followed (and with support built into the NATN to keep these students on course) will lead to their becoming the most productive citizens that their innate, nurtured talents will allow.

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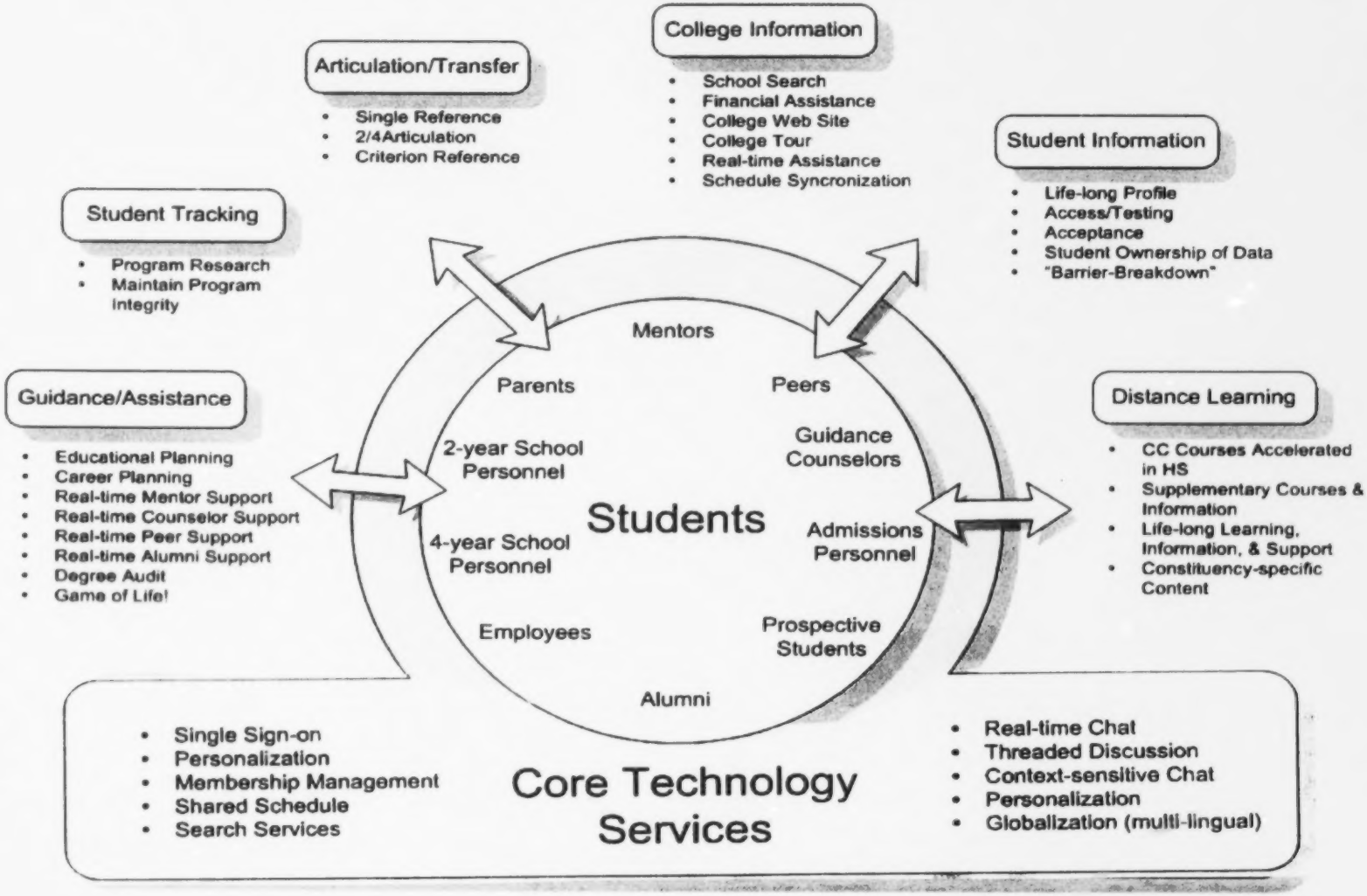
National Articulation and Transfer Network (NATN) Services Diagram



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